

# Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



## Western Chicken Turtle

*Deirochelys reticularia miaria*

**Common name** • Western Chicken Turtle

**Scientific name** • *Deirochelys reticularia miaria*

**State status** • Endangered

### Ecology

Western chicken turtles have an historic range that includes southeastern Missouri, the coastal plain of Arkansas, Louisiana west of the Mississippi River, eastern Texas and southeastern Oklahoma. In Missouri, these turtles inhabit cypress-bordered shallow ponds, river sloughs, temporarily water-filled ditches and drainage ditches. They also spend time on land near wetlands and may be observed in wetlands sunning on downed trees. They are active from mid-March to October and overwinter in the soil of lowland forests. During spring and early summer, females lay 5-15 eggs in loose soil about 4 inches or so underground. Young turtles hatch in the late summer or early fall. Western chicken turtles eat a variety of aquatic invertebrates.

### Reasons for Decline

At one time, the western chicken turtle was probably common in the swamps of extreme southeastern Missouri. Now, this species is one of the rarest turtles in the state. Destruction of wetlands and swamps for agriculture and urbanization projects has eliminated habitat for these turtles. In addition, degradation of remaining habitat because of non-point source pollution continues to threaten the status of the western chicken turtle in Missouri.

### Specific Recommendations

Protection and restoration of wetlands is critical for the survival of many species, including the western chicken turtle. Due to the year-round requirement these animals have on wetlands, impacts on these areas within the range of this species should be minimized.

→ Avoid removing or destroying unique habitat features, such as downed trees, that provide habitat for the western chicken turtle.

→ Draining or destroying known wetland habitat should be prohibited.

→ Erosion and sediment controls should be implemented, maintained and monitored for the duration of the project.

→ Disposal of wastes and garbage should be done in designated areas far from wetlands.

→ Avoid altering water levels in wetlands where western chicken turtles are present.

### General Recommendations

→ Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Wetlands and Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers.

→ Refer also to Amphibian and Reptile Management Guidelines.

### Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in wetlands, rivers and streams, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation  
Policy Coordination Section  
P.O. Box 180  
2901 W. Truman Blvd  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division  
901 North 5th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services Field Office  
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200  
Columbia, MO 65201  
Telephone: 573/876-1911

## **Disclaimer**

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